

THE THREE FACES OF KOKOSCHKA

J. P. HODIN: *Oskar Kokoschka. The Artist and His Time.* 251pp. Cory Adams and Mackay. £3 15s.

"Your book is a tribute to my work and thought which moves me very much," Kokoschka wrote to the author (according to the wrapper) after reading the manuscript of this book. His feelings can be easily understood, for Kokoschka himself, who is here revealed as a most egocentric artist, holds the floor from beginning to end, expounding his ideas about the art of the past and of today, offering his own explanations of everything he has done, bemoaning the state of the world, hating Christmas and Paris, extolling the human significance of his own art. Dr. Hodin is a faithful scribe and an apostle who follows the directions he is given: here, at least, he never disagrees with the most pretentious sentiments, and seems not to allow an adverse opinion to cross his mind. Mr. Hodin describes his book as "an historical assessment," but in the preface he is already stating that Kokoschka is "one of the rarest and most talented artists in the history of modern art" whose name is destined to figure in the future beside those of Grünewald, Rembrandt, Goya and Munch. Later he is presented as the "real creator of the experimental or ecstatic theatre," and the man who "became a master long before he dreamed of mastery." He is also "the finest landscape painter of his time"—must we dismiss Monet, Cézanne, Bonnard and Matisse thus quickly?—as well as "the greatest portrait painter of the age," an equal of Dürer—is there no place here for Modigliani, Picasso, Matisse, Beckmann and Sutherland? Kokoschka, we are told, "is undoubtedly a great draughtsman," his late graphics "all bear the mark of the great man," and in a final burst Mr. Hodin announces that "by 1930 (Kokoschka) had emerged as one of the greatest painters in the world."

These unguarded statements are no doubt the expression of a sincerely held point of view, and one which a critic would not wish to deny

Mr. Hodin the right to expound. Yet this viewpoint should at least be properly argued. Mr. Hodin's method is to start from the assumption that Kokoschka's art is unquestionably more serious and profound, finer in quality, more eternal in value than that of any other modern artist and then proceed to eliminate the achievements of others. Throughout his book Mr. Hodin is on the defensive, tilting away at the speckles of prejudices which he imagines keep Kokoschka from receiving the universal acclaim which he deserves. "A painter like Boudin had no sense of space," we learn, whereas a thundery landscape of Scotland has been depicted by Kokoschka "with such depth as had not been painted since Rubens." Kokoschka is quoted as saying "Movement and expression are my professional disease," whereupon he becomes for Mr. Hodin "an undoubted Baroque artist"—how fortunate that he was born near Vienna and admires Mauthner! Next, with a seeming lack of logic, Mr. Hodin tells his readers that "Expressionism is also Baroque and has therefore been attacked as degenerate," thus excluding Kokoschka from the company of the elect. Next Mr. Hodin is carried away into realms of fantasy:

Compare one of Kokoschka's early drawings with one of those by the artist of Paris in which a Toulouse-Lautrec type of head, shorn of all its original power, bleached and flattened into nothing—the portrait (say) of Yvette Guilbert of 1910—and one recognizes the presence of expressive formulas from the artist's soul. There is no sterile copying.

To whom is this meant to refer? To Picasso? Mr. Hodin might have explained, because the reference to a portrait of Yvette Guilbert of 1910 is incomprehensible. But then Mr. Hodin's knowledge of the Paris art scene, and of the originality and achievements of modern French artists, is not so strong as it might be, as witness his claim that the

"avowed aim" of the Fauves "was to enhance the effect of colour as design by enclosing and flattening it." All of this, and a great deal more in the same strain, constitutes the less worthy side of Mr. Hodin's book. But fortunately there are two sides to this volume, and though one may criticize the one part for its heavy-handedness full credit must be given to Mr. Hodin for getting together so much fascinating information and for giving us so many instructive insights into the working of the artist's mind. This is not a volume of art history or criticism, nor is it a biography: it is a portrait of a man in relation to his private world. Not surprisingly, therefore, it does not compete as an assessment of Kokoschka's art with the more carefully thought out monograph published by Miss Edith Hoffmann in 1947.

The value of Mr. Hodin's book lies in its record of long and intimate conversations with Kokoschka over the past thirty years. Primarily, it sets out to reveal Kokoschka's mentality, which means laboriously expounding his dislike of the modern world, the weight of his Austrian heritage, his long diatribes against political and economic developments in this century, and his insistence that he is "the last" true painter. There is no chronological sequence in the writing. Mr. Hodin takes various paintings, biographical episodes or chance conversational gambits as starting-points from which he moves freely backwards and forwards in time as his notes and memory prompt him in order to show the continuity of Kokoschka's outlook. He refers early on to Kokoschka having "three faces," those of the revolutionary idealist, the visionary and the would-be saviour of Man. Later on he refers to Kokoschka's painting falling into two periods, pre- and post-1923. The first of these he describes as a "negative early period, which was characterized by revolt, dissent, and anarchy, and was determined by the neuroses of the prewar period, the atmosphere of war, death, politi-

cal decadence, and the destructive power of love"; the second as "positive, life-affirming... a thrill coming after the nervous torment, a sudden outbreak of vitality which swept the past away like a storm." Within this pattern Mr. Hodin allows the artist to reminisce, to express his likes and dislikes in art and literature, to discuss his patrons, friends and sitters, and to talk about individual paintings. It all makes fascinating reading, but when what is said is compared with actual paintings, the unassailable mastery of the artist becomes less convincing. Kokoschka is a forceful artist who conveys with urgency the essence of his personal vision; but the urgency is greater than the creative power to turn it into a really intense pictorial statement. The composition is often unsteady if not toppling, the use of colour is messy and confused, the brushwork is wild and unformative, while the psychological depths and perceptual subtleties are sometimes obscured.

Take, for example, a painting called "The Crab", of 1940, which Mr. Hodin considers a typical and major work. What the eye sees is a dramatic cliffscape with houses filling the upper third of the canvas; way out at sea is a storm; in the middle distance a little boat is sailing calmly out of the picture; in the centre, where a largely concealed man is swimming, the waters of a bay are comparatively untroubled. The immediate foreground, which fills almost half of the picture, is occupied by a monster crab (this takes a bit of deciphering) with seemingly rubberoid limbs, which is made all the more important by being forced back upon the eye by the screen of cliffs behind it. A marine still-life, one concludes. Not at all. Listen to Mr. Hodin expounding its symbolism: "the theme was hospitality" and it is "revelation of the artist's bitterness." The following analytical description is then offered:

It shows the harbour of Polperro in a storm. A ship is struggling with the waves; it is a symbol of political un-

rest. In the harbour, protected by jagged cliffs, a man swims to the shore. A giant crab is waiting to fall upon him. Kokoschka explained that the crab was an extraordinary creature: its jaws were a contrivance of the sea, as a symbol of disaster? The Polperro scene... the small figure submerged in the composition is a point; and finally the crab, so comical proportions to support its intention. The destiny of the allegorical man becomes a parable of the human condition. How could the artist forget the horrors committed in the first confusion of the airports and harbours of England? A man who thought they had reached safety, but who were turned away!

From the diffuse way in which this picture is composed not even the most hardened puzzle-solver would think of reading all that into it. Then, the painting does not of itself convey the presence of hidden meanings, symbolism and bitter feelings. It is one not justified in concluding that the artist is not master enough of the language of painting to achieve his ends? Mr. Hodin certainly does it hard for his readers to decipher the sense of what he writes, for like some other picture which he discusses at length, it is so reproduced.

Mr. Hodin's hero-worship of Kokoschka is touching, for he takes it to the point of indignation. "England, with her official exhibition" held in 1962, a statement with which other critics may agree. And again, "Only Kokoschka's work really merits the accolade." Kokoschka's work the more one looks at that there are good reasons for this lack of enthusiasm, many of them to be found tucked away in the verbiage of Mr. Hodin's platitude.

Fiction

WHO IS TRAVEN?

B. TRAVEN: *The Night Visitor and Other Stories.* Introduction by Charles Miller. 313pp. Cassell. 30s.

As a literary mystery the identity of Traven rivals even that of Mr. W. H. Millions of copies of his books have sold in Latin America. *The Death Ship* alone in Russia, and several successful films have been made of his works; but even the author almost nothing is known. When his first novel, *The Death Ship*, was published in Germany in 1926 the publishers wrote to the author in Mexico asking him for photographs and biographical material. Traven refused, replying: "My personal history would not be disappointing to readers, but it is my own affair which I want to keep to myself." Such resolute shunning of the limelight has, of course, made the light search for him all the more arduous. And in the forty years since the publication of *The Death Ship* Traven has had a steady following of detective readers. *Life* magazine even offered a large prize to anyone who could identify him.

For about one thing everyone is agreed. The man who writes under the name B. Traven is not called B. Traven. There have been many theories: Traven is really Jack London, who only pretended to die (were London still alive he would be aged ninety-one); Travenologists are split between the American school, who reckon he is seventy-seven, and the German school, who reckon he is eighty-five; Traven is really ex-President Lopez Mateos of Mexico (Mateos reasonably pointed out, in a press conference in 1960, that he was only five years old when Traven's first book was published); Traven is a leper; Traven is Ret Marut, a refugee Bavarian socialist; Traven is a Negro; Traven is a Wobblay (a member of the Industrial Workers of the World); Traven is an American capitalist who saves his conscience by writing proletarian novels. Two highly promising lines of speculation that have so far not been explored are that Traven is T. E. Lawrence and that Traven is the Empress Anastasia.

The publication of *The Night Visitor* is notable if only because it seems to be the first time that Traven has allowed his publishers to make any kind of statement about his life. According to Charles H. Miller's introduction, Traven's Mexican "Form-14" passport gives his full name as Traven Torsvan, born in Chicago in 1890 and his parents are listed as Burton and Dorothy Torsvan (whom he has described to friends as Norwegian-Swedish immigrants). He has used the name Berick Traven Torsvan at times.

Mr. Miller tells of Traven growing up in Chicago and going to sea as a cabin boy at about the age of ten; he then becomes less specific with the mention of five well-known Traven myths: these boil down to Traven/Ret Marut and Traven/ex-Wobblay, expelled from the United States in the anti-red scare after the 1914-18 War. Other information provided by Mr. Miller is a 1937 letter from Traven in which he says that his first name is not Bruno, or Ben, or Benno, and in which he insists that he is not German but an American born in the United States.

The biographical information on the dustwrapper of *The Night Visitor*

for takes the same line, only adding a slight confusion by giving Traven Torsvan a first name of Berick instead of Berick. It also refers to the Croves theory, which was set out in the *New York Times Book Review* a year ago by William Weber Johnson. When John Huston was in Mexico in 1947 making his excellent film of Traven's *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* a small, well-built man called Hal Croves turned up, claiming to be Traven's representative. Huston signed Croves on the film, but was followed doggedly, and somewhat unscrupulously, by Luis Spota, a Mexican journalist. Spota discovered Berick Traven Torsvan, born Chicago 1890, living in Acapulco. Torsvan denied that he was Traven, and, after Spota had published his story, disappeared again. Subsequently books by Traven and screen plays of Traven stories by Croves continued to appear. Last year Traven gave an interview to the Mexican magazine *Siempre*—his first press interview—confirming that he was Torsvan.

Thus, with Traven firmly established as an American, the mystery would seem to be settled, even if a little anticlimactically. The Germans, however, are not ones to give up lightly, and they have energetically revived the Ret Marut theory. This work has mainly been done by a *Stern* reporter called Gerd Heidemann, and it is conveniently summarized in *Die Zeit* of May 12. Heidemann's researches took him to Switzerland, Brazil, Mexico, the United States and Norway, and he interviewed more than 300 people. His conclusion was that Traven, Croves and Ret Marut were the same person.

Richard Maurhut, Robert Marut or Ret Marut was an actor and writer of obscure origins, who before the First World War was, somewhat improbably, registered with the German police as English, born in San Francisco in 1882. With the outbreak of war Marut conveniently became American, and thus a neutral. He wrote for *März*, a fortnightly edited by Theodor Heuss, and started his own paper, *Der Ziegelbrenner*, which attacked the Kaiser, the war and the Pope. After a brief and active revolutionary postwar career in Bavaria Marut had to flee the country. With the passport of a friend he escaped to Rotterdam and then to Mexico in 1923. Here, according to the Heidemann theory, he took the name of Traven Torsvan.

The Ret Marut identity thus established satisfactorily—or at least, apart from Traven's confirmation, as satisfactorily as the Chicago-born Traven theory—what is the reason for what *Die Zeit* calls Marut-Torsvan-Traven's "pathologische Angst" about concealing his identity? Here Heidemann produces his trump card. Traven's wife apparently told Heidemann that "in a weak hour in Berlin" Traven had told her that his father's name was William—yes, that's right, Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Of course, Traven could have been pulling Mrs. Traven's leg, or Mrs. Traven could have been pulling Herr Heidemann's leg. Whatever the case, followers of the Traven hunt will be glad to know that the game continues.

NEWLY MINTED

MARGUERITE DURAS: *L'Amante anglaise.* 195pp. Paris: Gallimard. 10fr.

Chère Lannes may be mad and may be a murderer, and she also tells stories, like Marguerite Duras, which are not meant to be easy to follow. Moreover she cannot spell, so that when she wants to write "la menthe anglaise" she actually puts "l'ampoule en glaise," which is turned into "l'ampoule anglaise" by the time it reaches us. A double lesson in ambiguity, and in how easy it is to take melodrama in this new novel Mine Duras returns to the crime first investigated in her play *Les Violences de la Seine*—the murder of a deaf-mute woman whose body is cut up and thrown into the river. The story is told in a book, seen as one and the same thing? The question is never directly answered, because if it were there would be nothing left for the reader to puzzle over. His task is defined on the very first page: it is

to fill the gap between what the characters know and what they say. The clearest hints about what is really happening in *L'Amante anglaise* must come from the characteristic moments of repetition which give an unexpected weight to a banal phrase. As always with Mme. Duras, there is a profound tension between opposite forces in this book, between winter and summer, house and garden, communication and silence, freedom and fatality, and there are times when the novel seems to be a way of reconciling them. Claire Lannes treasures her mind because of its purgative qualities, and the problem that once led her to write to the newspapers was to find out how it could be grown inside in winter. In some obscure way this question seems to echo the question of the crime itself.

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AMERICA'S BIRD MAN

ALEXANDER B. ADAMS: *John James Audubon.* 510pp. Gollancz. 52s. 6d.

The twentieth-century biographers of Audubon, more addicted to unadorned truth than their nineteenth-century counterparts, have transmogrified the romantic and legendary figure of an old-fashioned fox, gently progressing toward respectable senility.

Mr. Adams, in what is unquestionably the best biography to date of the American artist-ornithologist, portrays with detachment a curiously modern person: illegitimate, pampered, buoyant but bad-tempered, a draft dodger, vain, touchy, undependable, spoiled, full of mannerisms and ingratitude. This is accomplished without apology and with no trace of either enthusiasm or rancour. Bancroft would have provided Audubon with a Bradford-like damaged soul; enthusiasm would have put the book in the Manchester class. Mr. Adams instead deals with Audubon the way Audubon dealt with the piteous woodpecker: he wired the dead bird and then painted him as he lived, background and all. Jefferson's embargo, Madison's war, Jackson's fiddling with the banking world, these appear as appropriately and unobtrusively as the dead tretrunk, the fox grapes, and the caterpillar.

If Mr. Adams, a naturalist and conservationist at heart, could have brought himself to identify with his subject—as the latter-day Freudians effort he would have been some domestic relations between Audubon and his wife, there would have been some interesting: of Audubon's apparently inflexible instinct for deserting every triumph into something small, and every defeat into something large.

Mr. Adams is no psychologist, however, and he sticks deadpan to the facts, never neglecting the drama, but never quite interpreting it. As a conservationist he must have approached Audubon's patron saint of a man who killed more birds in a lifetime than any of his contemporaries with the possible exception of the guillemot, "eggheads," the gannet,

clubbers, and the passenger pigeon exterminators, all of whose methods at one time or another he employed with the exception of the "eggheads," whom he missed seeing and with chiefly because their depredations made it necessary for him to await the laying of further eggs before his own specimens could be procured.

It is as an outdoor naturalist, one feels, that Mr. Adams comes closest to being in tune with Audubon, and herein lies the greatest merit and the small defect of this biography. As a conservationist, Audubon must have filled Mr. Adams with wonder, and whenever Mr. Adams gets a fix on this subject he chokes up, his prose going into a contrapuntal inflammatory variation of the conjunctive. Happily this is not often. What is of frequent occurrence is Audubon's escape to the woods and fields, and there will be an instantaneous realization on the part of every chairborne naturalist that Mr. Adams fully understands these constantly recurring episodes. Outdoor naturalists in general do not read books, and it is a happy conjunction that places in the hands of readers to whom the open air is denied a comprehensive and workmanlike biography for which they may supply their own psychological gloss.

Audubon, a Frenchman turned American, who thought of himself as an Englishman because he married an English wife, was a very odd duck indeed. He was an artist who could be offended by Landseer's painting of the death of a stag because the stag had his tongue out and his mouth shut. He wanted to represent life as it was, under the misapprehension (the more credible as it becomes more remote) that life in its natural state is beautiful.

The opportunities for interpreting Audubon's life are infinite, and have not been missed up here by an interpretation fitted to the needs of the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh, of which Mr. Adams is the Honorary Curator-at-Large, or of the Audubon Society of the Sewickley Valley, of which Mr. Adams is vice-president.

Duckworth Books

The Young Offender

D. J. WEST

Dr. Donald West has practised as a psychiatrist since 1951 specializing in the abnormalities related to criminal behaviour, and he is on the staff of the Cambridge University Institute of Criminology. Here, with the same grasp and lucidity that he has shown in earlier books (*Psychical Research Today* (1965) among them) he tackles in popular form one of the biggest social problems of the day—the criminal among the young. The special nature and extent of youthful crime; the backgrounds of the offenders; the latest psychological theories of girls, sex, drugs and violence; penal systems and "some cautionary thoughts"—these are some of the headings of his exhaustive survey.

He is cautious about generalizing from official statistics, unwilling to draw parallels between the delinquents of one country and another, and aware of the difficulties of translating successful advances in treatment into standard institutional practice. It is a wise, dispassionate book which will suggest new perspectives and ideas even to those most closely concerned with the subject.

Published on June 29 simultaneously by Penguin Books Ltd.

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EXTRA ORDINARY

MARTIN BELL: *Collected Poems 1937-1966*. 114pp. Macmillan. 25s.
 GEORGE MACBETH: *The Colour of Blood*. 77pp. Macmillan. 21s.
 DAVID HOLBROOK: *Object Relations*. 54pp. Methuen. 21s.
 KEN SMITH: *The Play*. 61pp. Cape. 18s.

State school and provincial university, detested wartime experience, dismally urban working life—these combine and contrast in Martin Bell, with a love of grand opera, French literature, some eccentrically chosen English poets, and some gaily ludicrous film comedians. Fatigued irony and persisting cheerfulness alternate. In politics, "Action is suspect and its end uncertain", but one must go on in hope. ("One is reluctant to trust a politician," Nye Bevan more than most perhaps.) In love, modern psychology hampers idealism and engenders self-doubt; but Mr. Bell's *alter ego*, "Don Senilio", writes brief, limpid and engaging love lyrics. The stance is awkward, endearing and honest.

All this adds up to an intellectual and social ambience that covers a considerable variety of subject-matter, tone and levels of achievement. Mr. Bell ranges from Eddie Cantor to Volpone, from Gérard de Nerval to a secondary modern headmaster. There are many jokes, public and private, and they are usually good ones—though there is an occasional note of not-so-funny violence.

Mr. Bell's main fault is that he conveys the fascination of the ordinary in terms that remain somewhat too prosaic. But the poems on kings (including shabby army camps and seedy schools), on friendship, and on the subject of middle-age show much acute social observation and a touching rawness.

George Macbeth's volume is, by contrast, bizarre and hieratic. The cult of poetry as an icy elaborate game still occasionally crops up (see the "Chinese" poems and the cryptically entertaining "Twelve Hotels"), though it seems to have lost some of its interest for him. And yet what we still have, in *The Colour of Blood*, is a collection of themes and situations which obstinately hide much trace of a personal attitude or a sense of personal roots. There is constant

inventiveness in the poems with Arabian, Indian and Jewish backgrounds; his eye for crisp, unerring detail remains as sharp as ever; and his brisk technical flair continues to impress and surprise (as in a beautifully witty poem on metre). But some of the diction has an air of self-consciously glossy accomplishment, and there is some lapsing into stock properties when the tension fails. All this originality of vision and emotional pressure might now perhaps be given a freer personal rein. Passages in the most successful poems here (like "The Ward" and "An Elegy") point in that direction.

A poetry devoted to punstaking honesty about intimate relationships needs more of a finally moving and resolving quality (and more variety) than it gets in *Object Relations*. The personal frankness and freshness of observation of David Holbrook's first volume, *Imaginations*, is now sadly dispersing into banality—

Her head's like a pale flower, delicately Held on its stem as she sits in the garden

—or else deliquescent into garrulous, long-lined philosophizing about the objects of nature.

Ken Smith explores the theme of implacable nature present in the work of poets like Ted Hughes, Ted Walker and Jon Silkin, but with a sort of prosy reasonableness. Many of his poems (for example, "Spring Poem" and "Water") tend to hesitate between strict natural reality and between strict natural reality and a temptation to be rather mechanically anthropomorphic. They accumulate quiet and imprecise effects in short, unexciting free verse lines. There is not the immediate physical contact with nature which David Holbrook manages in a rather feld way, and there is an over-use of a small stock of key images. Patches of mild surrealism and protest add a little colour, but this still remains an honest, vague and preliminary volume.

BACKING LOSERS

JOY GRANT: *Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop*. 266pp. Batsford. £2.

This is a useful contribution to the reappraisal of Georgianism that now seems to be in progress. It fills in a good deal of period detail left out of Mr. Robert Ross's *The Georgian Revolt*, and it brings to life a man and a poet who have been underrated where he has not been thoroughly neglected. Monro was a many-sided participant in the London literary scene during the twenty years following 1912. His life was dedicated to poetry and to the popularization of poetry. He began as an editor of minority magazines for the encouragement of new talent, but his most notable contribution was the opening in 1913 of the Poetry Bookshop in Bloomsbury. Here he pursued three interrelated lines of activity: the sale of books of verse, his own poetry publication and the holding of poetry readings to bring poets and the public into direct contact.

Monro believed in what he called "the accepted axiom that poetry is written for sound rather than sight reading". This is the kind of dogma which casts doubt on his reliability as a poet. Nevertheless, the readings meant much to him and to some of the poets of that time who were able to meet each other in the glow of his generous hospitality. As a publisher he also had limitations:

There was a time, before the First World War, when, had he possessed the insight and initiative to seize his chance, Monro might have found himself the publisher of most of the most interesting and progressive new verse available in this country. Had he accepted Eliot, had he accepted Thomas, and been responsible for establishing their poetic reputations, the prestige of the Poetry Bookshop as a publishing house would have been enormously enlarged. As it was, the liveliest young talents of the postwar years went elsewhere.

As an entrepreneur Monro showed himself catholic in taste,

though with strong personal preferences. He did not consider it his duty to allow his preferences to influence the books he displayed for readings. Nevertheless, in his criticism for the press he made a secret of his views, even about the books he had published and befriended. "Stevenson's reputation died soon after him"; not altogether true in this country, but maybe in America. "His enemies have been the door to no one actually bars the door to him any more, but by him much taken, few critics pay him due attention."

It is to Miss Grant's credit that she has undertaken the first length study of the texts of Monro's several volumes of verse. Her by-blow examination of many of the poems in chronological order has long been a neglected though necessary task. It will have been worth while. She has her lapses, as when she writes of the poetry, though over-enthusiastic, "Overheard on a Salina". It was careless of him to let nymphs with goblets and to play lagoon in the proximity of a marsh." This is capricious. It is true that in this little dialogue all the lines work, but there is a nymph and one girl, and a boy bringing them together in a family way. Inherently unpoetic; not does the poem place the lagoon in proximity to the salina.

In general, however, Miss Grant's account of Monro's painful progress as a poet from Keatsian postures to Georgian imitation to the final, periphrastic moving lyrics of such ambiguous experiences is judicious and illuminating. "His real motive for himself, was to be a channel of communication between poets and the public." It may have been his motive, but the final value of his life was to be found through suffering, dedication and self-discovery a few last poems of real individuality.

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SCOTCH STEVENSON

EDWIN M. EIGNER: *Robert Louis Stevenson and Romantic Tradition*. 258pp. Princeton University Press. London: Oxford University Press. £2 8s.

Professor Eigner's book is a prize-winning study of the American English for the present time, according to the rules of the American English. The usual conventions are observed, and academic fashion is taken as an absolute. Stevenson was a man of integrity and integrity, proving himself far superior in his country, but maybe in America. "His enemies have been the door to no one actually bars the door to him any more, but by him much taken, few critics pay him due attention."

It is to Miss Grant's credit that she has undertaken the first length study of the texts of Monro's several volumes of verse. Her by-blow examination of many of the poems in chronological order has long been a neglected though necessary task. It will have been worth while. She has her lapses, as when she writes of the poetry, though over-enthusiastic, "Overheard on a Salina". It was careless of him to let nymphs with goblets and to play lagoon in the proximity of a marsh." This is capricious. It is true that in this little dialogue all the lines work, but there is a nymph and one girl, and a boy bringing them together in a family way. Inherently unpoetic; not does the poem place the lagoon in proximity to the salina.

In general, however, Miss Grant's account of Monro's painful progress as a poet from Keatsian postures to Georgian imitation to the final, periphrastic moving lyrics of such ambiguous experiences is judicious and illuminating. "His real motive for himself, was to be a channel of communication between poets and the public." It may have been his motive, but the final value of his life was to be found through suffering, dedication and self-discovery a few last poems of real individuality.

Professor Eigner respects the Daubean canon. *The Wrong Box* is written off in a footnote not as irrelevant to his theme (which would be reasonable) but as being wholly Lloyd Osbourne's book (has he not?). And he respectfully says: "I believe, as do all readers"—note the word "all"—that *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Weir of Hermiston* are the author's most valuable products; but when he comes to analyse the latter, he wisely hedges his bet. Having said all this, and having only condemned the recurrent mis-

spelling of some proper names, it is a pleasure to praise an attractively written and stimulating book.

Stevenson is carefully fitted into the tradition of romance-writing. This is proper textbook stuff, and Professor Eigner does it well. He gives us a lot of *Quellenforschung*, some of it highly ingenious, without attaching too much importance to it. Then comes a favourite nineteenth-century theme, the *Doppelgänger*. Of course Stevenson used and was intrigued by the concept—*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is there to prove it—but Professor Eigner slightly complicates life by fitting all he can into this mould. He is at his best on Stevenson's psychological views and limitations: his tendency to let all his heroes drift into failure, compromise or retreat, with only the Durie brothers left face to face till the end. If Professor Eigner had cast his net a little wider, he might have pointed out how this irresolution affects the form as well as the substance of some of Stevenson's books: the fading-out of *The Wrecker* without any formal ending; the epilogue of *The Ebb-Tide* bringing emotion to rest without any resolution of problems, after a brilliant dramatic episode which comes to a climax with the first inside view of Aitwater, a character whom Professor Eigner oversimplifies and under-rates; and the combination of fun, verbal brilliance, ethical confusion and irrelevance at the end of the most explicitly moral piece in all his fiction, *The Dynamiter*, which Professor Eigner ignores.

To some extent he suffers, or makes his readers suffer, by being too little of a Scot. He is right to treat Stevenson primarily as part of English, and indeed of European, literature, not dependent on local gimmicks. But the Scotch novels fit into a mythical background largely created by Sir Walter Scott, which at the time was shared by English as well as Scotch readers. Professor Eigner rightly backs up Stevenson's denial that, as a novelist, he was a disciple of Scott; but neither Stevenson nor any other writer of that period on *la manière d'Ecosse* could get away from him as a myth-maker, any more than Euripides could from Homer. This side of Stevenson is under-analysed—witness the curious reference to the border Elliotts as highlanders, in however generalized a sense—in an otherwise very thorough book.

FRENCH HEMINGWAY

ERNEST HEMINGWAY: *Oeuvres romanesques*. Tome 1. Edited by Roger Asselineau. 1,472pp. Paris: Gallimard. 56.55fr.
 JACQUES CABAU: *La Prairie Perdue*. Histoire du roman américain. 354pp. Paris: Le Seuil. 19.50fr.

"The Bibliothèque de la Pléiade" is well known as one of the most attractive and compendious series of texts ever to have appeared. The works chosen for it have all a good reason for being called "classic" and the choice is, consequently, most interesting as an illustration of contemporary taste. The section of the series devoted to twentieth-century writers is likely to be the most controversial, as time has not yet thoroughly sifted them, but a list of those so far included may cause a little surprise. Gide, Montherlant, Valéry, and Ernest Hemingway is the only writer in English to be included. There is not a single British writer in

introduction, a useful chronology and excellent annotations. M. Asselineau cannot praise Hemingway too highly: "Grâce à ce substrat symbolique", he writes, "les romans de Hemingway acquiescent des dimensions cosmiques...".

The sympathy among French critics for American literature which M. Asselineau reveals is shown equally by M. Jacques Cabau in his study of the symbolism of the American novel. He begins by defining the mythology of the American novel; the size of the land, the loneliness of man, the absence of women, slavery; these were at hand "quand débarqua le puritanisme". His argument is hardly original, but it is put forward with great ingenuity and persuasiveness and the English or American reader as well as the French will be often enlightened by his application of the frontier thesis to American novelists, from Cooper to Bellow and Updike.

Éditions Robert Laffont's April issue of *La Revue de Poche* is devoted to current English literature, and contains stories by Graham Greene, Peter Marshall, Christine Brooke-Rose, Ann Quinn, Alan Sillitoe, Anthony Burgess and Montague Haltrecht. There is also an introduction by Olivier Todd. The issue is distributed by Hachette, London, at 6s.

AMERICAN COMEDIAN

J.-P. LEBEL: *Buster Keaton*. Translated by P. D. Stovin. 179pp. Zwemmer. 12s. 6d.
 RUDI BLESCH: *Keaton*. 395pp. Secker and Warburg. £2 15s.

BUSTER KEATON with CHARLES SAMUELS: *My Wonderful World of Slapstick*. Introduction by Dilya Powell. 282pp. Allen and Unwin. 30s.

In an early short of Keaton's there is one of those classic, infallible gags. Keaton has built a boat, and at last it is ready for launching. Standing proudly at the prow, facing away from the camera, Keaton waits as the boat moves slowly down the slipway, and then, inexorably, straight on down to the bottom, until boat and owner have vanished completely beneath the waves. Infallible, one says, because it is a matter of timing and geometry: the figure of the comic is small, his face is not seen, it could be anybody. But when the gag was restaged identically in *The Buster Keaton Story*, by Keaton himself, though with Donald O'Connor as Keaton, it somehow just did not work. The form was the same, but the psychic presence of the star was missing: the electric communication between performer and audience was not set up.

Of course, that is not an explanation, but simply an alternative statement of the mystery. To illuminate the mystery of why and how the original in *The Boat* works, while its later facsimile does not, we might turn hopefully to these three books. On the whole, we would look in vain in the two larger volumes. But M. Lebel boldly tackles the job of analysis, and comes nearer to the heart of the mystery than one would think possible. Indeed, his is one of the best books ever written on the art of screen comedy. His style, particularly in enthusiastic (but entirely justified) condemnation of other critics too eager to render their enjoyment of silent comedy respectable by philosophizing it, is not perhaps always quite at home in English. But his translator has done a good, clean job on the author's very precise descriptions of the machinery by which Keaton's films work.

And this is the point. Of all film

artists, Keaton is the least ready to appeal to our sentimentality, to demand our sympathy. He is the perfect classicist, making his effect by rigorous construction, exact timing, the ruthless logic by which everything follows from the initial premise, the steadfast refusal to do anything which is not functional, just for a laugh. One of the most illuminating passages in Keaton's as-told-to autobiography (almost the only one which offers any insight into his methods, unfortunately) is that in which he discusses the diving sequence of *The Navigator* and why a marvellous sight-gag he shot for it failed to work in context, interrupting as it did the flow of the plot. Another advantage Keaton had over all other silent comics, Chaplin included, was his sheer genius as a film-maker. Chaplin's gift was as a performer, and as a brilliantly accomplished presenter of his own performance. Keaton was no less gifted as a comic performer, but he was also a great director; *The General*, for instance, is one of the most superbly made films ever, with everything in its place, nothing too much, its great visual beauty always entirely in the service of the whole effect. Here, again, M. Lebel gives Keaton due credit; his book is if anything more about Keaton the film-maker than Keaton the star.

Mr. Blesch's book is a quite intelligent work of popularization. He tends to go in for too much admiring description of the action in sequences or whole films by Keaton, without apparently having any particular taste to make by them (as M. Lebel always has) beyond the general assertion that they were funny. On the whole one looks in vain to Mr. Blesch for any analysis of how and why they were funny, and his concentration is almost exclusively on Keaton as performer. However, he seems to have done his research conscientiously, interviewing Keaton himself and all he could find of Keaton's surviving collaborators. Much of the material he quotes, such as Clyde Bruckman explaining how Keaton managed certain impossible-seeming feats in *The Three Ages* and *Sherlock Jr.* without camera cheating, or Keaton himself on the famous multiple-exposure scene in *The Playhouse*, is fascinating and valuable. And the picture he presents of Keaton's own private personality is warm and sympathetic. This and the Lebel book, in fact, make excellent complements to each other.

The autobiography, published in the United States seven years ago, and now at last issued here with a nostalgic introduction by Dilya Powell, is unfortunately far inferior to either. Mr. Blesch has rescued most of the useful material from it for his book, and for the rest it is a sad example of the sort of ghosted autobiography which seems hopelessly designed to appeal mainly to some imaginary general reader who has never heard of its author/subject and is likely to get bored as soon as he or she assumes the centre of the stage. Thus most of the information about Keaton's films it contains is sketchy, avoiding dates, names and the other fiddly details which anyone really interested would want. It has rather too much woolly but picturesque writing about Hollywood in the mad Twenties, including an account of the Arbuckle scandal which differs considerably in its statement of the facts from Mr. Blesch's but speaks well for Keaton's sterling qualities as a faithful friend. Of course any admirer of Keaton will want the book, but he should prepare to be disappointed.

ITALIAN DIRECTOR

ANGELO SOLMI: *Fellini*. Translated by Elizabeth Greenwood. 183pp. Merlin Press. £2 2s.
 GIAN LUIGI RONDÌ: *Italian Cinema Today, 1952-65*. 279pp. Dennis Dobson. £4 4s.

The original Italian version of the Signor Solmi's book is a good, straightforward, bio-critical study of Fellini and his work. A few short sections on the "ideas" of Fellini, or at least the world of ideas in which he lives, preface a sensible and sympathetic study of his work film by film. Signor Solmi is not much given, happily, to elaborate flights of theoretical criticism: instead he tells us a lot about the backgrounds of the films, the sometimes trying circumstances of their making, what is actually in them, what Fellini intended, or says he intended, by them, and how they were critically and commercially received. For this English version of the book the text has been brought somewhat up to date, to include a brief account of *8½*.

In all, this is a useful book to have available in English. The more pity, then, that it has been so badly done.

One may turn a blind eye to the "authorised economy standard" paper on which it is printed, but the accumulation of sheer errors in transcription and translation is really too much. Almost every foreign name to crop up is misspelt at least once (in a couple of pages, taken at random, "Romy Schneider", "Tomas Milan", "Boccaccio", "Alain Ronals", "Francesco Rot", "Luci della Ribalta"). The text also sports oddities like "L'on dernier, à Martenbad", though this, since it comes in a new passage, may perhaps be Signor Solmi's fault. And nobody seems to have bothered to check the correct English for the simplest film technical terms: "soggetto" is a story or subject, not a script; "sceneggiatura" is script, not "staging", whatever that may mean. The bibliography misspells French and Italian with

equal abandon. Surely if a job is worth doing, as this was, it is worth doing with a necessary minimum of care and attention.

Signor Rondì, brother of Brunello Rondì, the film-maker and constant collaborator of Fellini, is one of the brighter and less eccentric of Italian film critics. He does not have much opportunity to demonstrate the fact here, though, since all he is called on to do is to provide brief sketches of the careers of the major modern Italian film-makers, plus even briefer notes on a couple of dozen minor, to preface selections of stills from the films. The pictures are the main point of the book, and they are on the whole intelligently chosen and well reproduced. A longish list of errata on the last page by no means exhausts the book's supply of misspellings.

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Subtitled *Strange True Tales of the Vintage Flying Days*, and that's exactly what it is about. It has one important advantage—Wing-Commander Macmillan was himself one of England's best-known pioneers and one of the four long stories told here is about a unique flight he made in the 1920s. None of the stories have been properly told before. 21s. net.

BELL

SAME OLD SICILY

ERCOLE PATTI : *Cousin Agata*. Translated by Lovett F. Edwards. 159pp.
Chatto and Windus. 18s.

in lascivious piggy-back by a middle-aged man; in between these two scenes comes a tale of long-term adultery, in which the lovers age across almost forty years—from the early 1920s till the present day—and nothing seems to change except their gradually aging bodies. The world elsewhere may have been overturned in these years, but to the Sicilian bourgeois it still seems much the same. Signor Palti gets its overripe atmosphere well in descriptions of life in Catania and in the countryside nearby, and has a feeling for the country that is rare in Italians. One people he is less successful and often vulgar, his talent being a superficial one in the literal sense that he is good merely on the surface of everything he deals with, and uses minute, unmetaphorical realism with photographic precision. This, naturally enough, tends to diminish its human spirit; but on a roosting pig a lizard, an old newspaper or the smell of wax candles he is impressively right.

MAN IN

in *Magic*. 208pp. Heinemann. 25s.

life, even if it is a significant feat. The novel finds him, a publisher and editor, looking for a room, having just walked out of the flat of his protector, Jason. He hires his room in divorcee Nora Brewster's lodgings, Lexington Avenue brownstone. What we then see is his awakening not only to heterosexual desire, but love but to adult relationships and responsibilities of every kind. The mood of his breakthrough is beautifully caught, and all the characters from Nora's nine-year-old daughter to Max, the lodger mad on his food, are precisely observed. It will not be easy to forget this perceptive portrayal of bruised but gradually groping their way back to normality.

EL

in the Desert

ACT IN THE COURT

ACT IN THE COURT *The Trial of Soren Qvist*

B. FALL
Illustrated



ALL MAIL

COLLEGE OF LIBRARIANSHIP WALES

Library, Research and Information Services Department

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Salary: Assistant Librarian Grade B £980-£1,845, starting point according to qualifications and experience. (At present this salary scale is under review.)

Applications stating age, education, qualifications, experience, present post held, special interests, teaching experience, together with the names of three referees should be sent to the Principal, College of Librarianship, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, as soon as possible.

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The University wishes to recruit staff in readiness for its move to Guildford in 1968 and 1969. The following positions are now vacant at Batterssea, and staff are needed to assist in the development of the Library services.

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Particulars about the above posts can be obtained from the Staff Officer, University of Surrey, Batterssea Park Road, London, S.W.11, to whom applications (with names and addresses of three referees) should be sent by 14th July, 1967.

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Applications are invited for the post of

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Application forms and particulars from the Establishment Officer, Civic Centre, Wood Green, N.22. Closing date for receipt of applications, 21st July, 1967.

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(a) one PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

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Applications with the names of two persons to whom reference may be made should reach the Director, Oldham Public Libraries, Union Street, Oldham, not later than 12th July, 1967. Further details on application.

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Principal: Alexander Keith, M.A., B.Sc.

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Application forms and details of duties, etc., may be had from the Secretary, Stranmillis College, Belfast 9, by whom applications may be received not later than 20th July, 1967.

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